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SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MTS

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SUBJECT: DCM RAPSON CALLS ON NEW MFA AMERICAS OFFICIAL,  
URGES BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

Classified By: Political Counselor Mark D. Clark, reason 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) DCM Rapson and polcouns on March 20 paid an initial courtesy call on the Malaysian Foreign Ministry's new Senior Under Secretary for Americas, EU and Russia, Ms. Wan Napsiah.

(Note: Napsiah is the fourth Under Secretary handling U.S. affairs in the past three years. End Note.) DCM conveyed our interest in improving communications with the MFA, and the Americas Division in particular, in order to best take advantage of new opportunities arising from changes in administrations in both countries this year. DCM offered that, once senior appointments are in place in Washington and Kuala Lumpur, both sides should consider whether and how to continue a senior policy dialogue, recalling that our countries had met in May 2006 for an initial round. Napsiah agreed and said the MFA would need some time, as the incoming administration of Najib Razak opens the possibility of changes in the Foreign Minister and other top MFA officials. DCM encouraged Napsiah to visit Washington, something that her three immediate predecessors had not done. The DCM and polcouns raised current priorities including the importance of export control legislation; U.S. urging of GOM not to approve the opening of Iran's Bank Mellat in Malaysia; U.S. support for Malaysia's inclusion in the piracy contact group; GOM response to allegations of trafficking of refugees and need for protection and recognition of refugee status.

¶2. (C) Napsiah said she welcomed good communications with the Embassy. While attentive to the DCM's points on priority issues, she was non-committal in response and indicated she was still reading in for her new brief. Napsiah inquired about POTUS and the Secretary's future travel to the region, and emphasized her government's interest in including Malaysia as a possible stop. Napsiah spoke of her five years as Under Secretary for Maritime Affairs, and said she had noticed recently a more active U.S. naval presence in the South China Sea. She referred to China's claims in the South China sea as "totally unrealistic" and "very extreme."

¶3. (SBU) Bio note: Napsiah has served three overseas assignments: Stockholm, Bangkok, and Vancouver as Consul General. She left Vancouver in 2003 to head the Ministry's Maritime Affairs division, where she developed expertise on law of the sea and the South China Sea. She informed us that former ambassador to the U.S. Ghazzali Khalid had offered her the DCM position in Washington in 2003, which she turned down in order to return to Malaysia. In early 2009, she helped to lead boundary dispute negotiations with Brunei. Napsiah has an excellent command of English.

KEITH